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ABSTRACT

The Stride Rite Intergenerational Day Care Center is located in the Stride Rite Corporation's headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The facility is designed to provide day care to both children and elders, using two separate wings to afford privacy to each group and a large central area for informal interaction between children and elders. The program was developed to meet the physical, social, and intellectual needs of children and elders through a carefully planned and supervised curriculum. Activities for the children and elders, separately and together, include reading and writing stories, playing table games, celebrating holidays and birthdays, cooking and eating, enjoying arts and crafts, and going on field trips. The center operates through a public-private collaboration involving the Stride Rite Corporation; Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, which provides the expertise in screening and referral of elderly clients, curriculum development, and training; and Wheelock College, which provides the academic framework to support the program's research and curriculum development components. This collection of materials on the center and its plans for development includes: (1) a program overview; (2) a booklet relating the Stride Rite Corporation's child care experience; (3) a profile of Stride Rite from an article; (4) three newspaper articles on the intergenerational program; and (5) a brochure on the Center's Elder Program. (AC)

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The Stride Rite Intergenerational Day Care Center

Background

The Center

The Stride Rite Intergenerational Day Care Center is located within The Stride Rite Corporation's headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Center is designed to provide day care to children and elders in the same facility.

The design of the Center allows a traffic pattern that encourages informal interaction between children and elders while also providing privacy for each group. The Center is divided into two separate wings which are connected through a large central area. The children's wing has four classrooms for different age groups; the elders' wing has three rooms designed for a variety of quiet and noisy activities. The central -- or middle core area -- houses administrative offices, a kitchen and dining facility, and a resource center which includes a conference room and library.

Among the special features of the facility: wide doorways which can accommodate wheelchairs; floor surfaces which make mobility easier for frail elders, and handrails along many corridors. An outdoor area is under design.

A total of 79 day care openings for children and elders will be provided at the Center. The program will serve 55 children between the ages of 15 months and six years, and 24 elders 60 years of age or older. As a continuation of Stride Rite's commitment to the community, approximately one-half of all openings will be reserved to serve low-income elders and children from the Somerville-Cambridge community.

The Center will serve as a teacher-training site for students and a research site for faculty from Wheelock College and Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services.

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The Program

The Intergenerational Day Care Program will be implemented in two stages. The first stage is already underway -- introducing the children to the new facility and preparing them for the arrival of the elders. The second stage is expected to take place after the first of the year, when the elders arrive on site.

The Program will meet the physical, social and intellectual needs of each group through a carefully planned and supervised curriculum, which will foster regular daily contact between the elders and the children. Intergenerational curricula is expected to be fine-tuned as the program evolves. Activities might include (children/elders separate and together): reading and writing of stories; table games; celebration of holidays and birthdays; cooking and eating; arts and crafts, and field trips.

Ongoing research and evaluation of the program is expected to provide information on the effects of intergenerational care on children, elders, employees, employers, families and the community.

Research on the program's curriculum will be used:

- To develop college and graduate level curricula and training materials for professional intergenerational caregivers and specialists

- To produce curricula on aging and lifespan issues for preschool, elementary, middle-school and high school teachers

- To develop a "blueprint" for other organizations seeking to duplicate the Stride Rite model.

Workshops, seminars and support groups will also be designed to foster greater awareness of aging, lifespan, and caregiving issues among corporate managers and employees, families of participants, and the local community.

Benefits

- A model public/private partnership

- Intergenerational understanding

•Cost efficiency by bringing elders and children together in a single day care center

•Resource efficiency by uniting the unique services and expertise of multiple organizations

•Research that will contribute to the limited body of information that exists on the social effects and policy implications of intergenerational caregiving

The Public-Private Collaboration

The Stride Rite Corporation, Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, Inc. and Wheelock College have joined forces to research the issues of dependent care and to create a national model for responding to the crisis in day care for children and elders. The collaboration has set three key objectives for the Intergenerational Day Care Program:

•To provide a replicable model for intergenerational day care

•To study to social effects and policy implications of work-based intergenerational day care

•To meet the local community's immediate elder care and child care needs.

The most important outcome of the model will be a "blueprint" for the development of intergenerational day care programs for other communities including: program curriculum; staff training manuals; evaluation tools; written research plan; documentation of implementation steps, and consultation services.

The Stride Rite Corporation

Stride Rite has a long history of interest in dependent care issues.

Part of the company's response to dependent care needs of employees has included an eight-week paid maternity leave and an18-week family leave policy. In addition, The Stride Rite Children's Center, the first on-site, employer-sponsored childcare center in the U.S., is considered a national model. The Center was founded in 1971. A second child care center was opened several years later.

Wheelock College

A leading academic institution specializing in early childhood education and family studies, Wheelock College will provide the academic framework necessary to support the research and curriculum development components of the Stride Rite Intergenerational day care Program. The Boston-based college was founded in 1888.

Wheelock will work to design an intergenerational curriculum that will bring together the children and elders at the Center in mutually supportive activities. Wheelock students will student teach at the Center and Wheelock faculty will conduct research for the development of training materials for intergenerational teachers.

Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, Inc. (SCES)

SCES is a non-profit organization founded in 1972 to serve elders and their families living in Somerville, Cambridge and the greater Boston area. An experienced human-services agency, SCES provides services that enable elders to live in comfort, dignity and independence.

Among the many programs SCES offers is ElderLink. ElderLink provides services to employers and employees concerned about elder care. Seminars, referral services and one-on-one assistance to employees through ElderLink allows organizations to be responsive to the needs of employees caring for aging parents or other relatives.

For the Stride Rite Intergenerational Program, SCES will provide the expertise in screening and referrals of elder clients, as well as the development of the adult day care curriculum and training models.

The information presented in this booklet will provide the reader with a basic understanding of the Stride Rite child care experience. Our example will offer insight into the process of establishing an employer-sponsored child care center.

When we opened our first center in 1971, the subject of workplace child care was new. Since that time the demand for quality, affordable child care has steadily gained the attention of business, industry and the government as one response to the changing needs of the workforce.

Employer-sponsored child care at Stride Rite is working. We are pleased to share our experience in the hope that we may provide a useful model to the business community and encourage the expansion of quality children's services for working parents.

Arnold Hiatt
Chairman of the Board
The Stride Rite Corporation
February, 1987

History

The first Stride Rite Children's Center opened in May, 1971, in Roxbury, Massachusetts, the site of the company's original headquarters. Its purpose was to provide quality child care that would be available to children of Stride Rite employees and to children from the surrounding community.

In January, 1983, a year and a half after Stride Rite moved its corporate offices to Cambridge, we opened our second center, located adjacent to company headquarters. It, too, serves employees' children and community children.

Today, the Centers have grown to accommodate up to a total of 90 children ranging in ages from 2.9 to 6 years in a program that operates year round. The continued success of the Centers is due in large part to the decisions that were made during the planning stages. Company sponsorship, parent participation, qualified staffing, and community involvement have been distinguishing characteristics of the Centers.

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Program Philosophy

We recognize that the early years of a child's life are crucial to ensure the well-adjusted development of an individual.

Our program promotes the safety and well-being of each child and is designed to meet the child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs at various stages of development. Special emphasis is placed on establishing each child's sense of security and self-esteem. To help promote this, we offer a wide range of activities that are appropriately designed for the ages of the children we serve.

Daily Schedule

Although the hours vary slightly, each of our Centers is open for 10 hours a day. As the children arrive, they are served breakfast and, afterwards, may participate in an unstructured play time. This is planned to allow the children to enter the group at their own pace and encourage them to make choices within defined options. Available activities may include the sandbox, puzzles, reading a story, or playing with playdoh.

By 9:00 a.m. the children have begun the more structured part of their day. The children are grouped by age and development, and each group meets with its teachers for a "sharing" time. Discussion topics may include the weather, the daily schedule, or weekend plans. We encourage the children to become more comfortable as they take their turns speaking and listening.

After this sharing time, each group has a structured activity time. The children may do a cooking project, make a group mural, or play a reading-readiness game. Each child may work co-operatively with several others or may choose to work alone on a special project.

Our outdoor time is a very important part of the day. This time is unstructured, and the children are free to create their

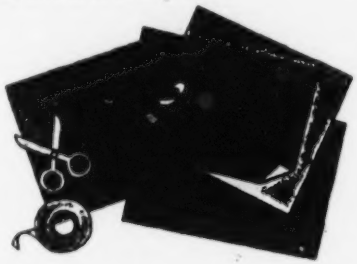
own games or use the time to suit their individual needs, at the same time enjoying fresh air and exercise. After the children come in from outdoors, there is a music or story time before lunch.

In addition to providing a nutritious meal, our lunchtime is an opportunity for the children to sit in a small group with a teacher and discuss the morning, or several parents may join the children for lunch. It is a social time for everyone.

After lunch, the children brush their teeth and may be read to before settling down for their naptime which lasts about one and one-half hours. The teachers rub backs and sing lullabyes until the children are quiet and resting. During this time, a child may elect to read quietly on the mat instead of take a nap.

As individual children begin to wake up, they may read quietly or help the teacher prepare snack for the rest of their group. When everyone has awakened snack is served, after which a short gathering is held to discuss plans for the afternoon. Children may then choose an activity they would like to participate in. The afternoon is less structured with activities designed to hold the children's interests, yet open enough that a child can leave with ease when a parent arrives.

At the close of the day, the children may be read to or play games while awaiting the arrival of their parents.



Parents

The cooperative partnership between parents and the Centers' staff is a vital part of The Stride Rite Children's Centers' program. Parents are involved in many ways. Informally, they are welcome to drop by during the day to say hello, share a lunch with their child, or administer medication. The beginning and end of the day are important times for the parent and teacher to exchange information about the child and to discuss any concerns either one may have. We also have several family get-togethers throughout the year that are well-attended and very much enjoyed.

On a more formal basis, we schedule monthly parent discussion groups, and some parents are members of our Children's Centers' Board of Directors.

Parents are also encouraged to donate useable household items to the Centers, to engage in special activities with the children, or to accompany the staff and children on field trips when possible.

We believe it is important for us to serve the entire family and to have our families feel comfortable and "at home" with us.

Staffing

The dedication of our staff members is the prime contributor to the program's stability. Because of this concern and caring, we have earned the trust and confidence of employee parents and other parents within the community.

The staff at each of our Centers includes a Site Director, Assistant Director, teachers, and assistant teachers. We maintain a teacher/child ratio of one to seven. In addition to our paid staff, we regularly have volunteers, interns, and student teachers working in our Centers.

The teachers are responsible for planning and implementing the curriculum for their groups. Supervision and training are done on a regular basis by the Director and Assistant Director. The staff meets weekly to exchange information and resources and to participate in management decisions.

Each Children's Center employee receives medical/dental insurance and four weeks of paid vacation yearly in addition to paid legal holidays and sick/personal leave.

We encourage our staff members to continue their professional development by participating in workshops, conferences and university coursework.

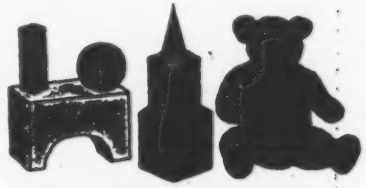
Licensing/ Incorporation

The Centers are licensed by the Massachusetts Office for Children and are in compliance with state and local regulations for building codes, fire laws, and health and safety rules. We meet or exceed the standards for staffing and curriculum development.

The Centers are incorporated as a non-profit organization and have a separate Board of Directors who determine long-range policies. The Board includes two Company and four community representatives, three parents, and each Center's Director.

Value of Employer-Sponsored Child Care

For many years The Stride Rite Corporation has recognized that the Children's Centers are a valuable investment, both for community parents and as an employee benefit. Child care is, undeniably, an important factor in recruiting and retaining quality personnel and in reducing absenteeism. In addition, when parents know that their children are safe and well-cared for, employee morale and work productivity are higher.



The Centers have received considerable national recognition and have demonstrated the ***need*** for high-quality, affordable, employer-sponsored child care. During the last 10 years, Stride Rite has attracted the attention of a number of companies and has participated in the development of over 50 centers around the country, both corporate and non-corporate, such as in hospitals, universities, and municipalities. We continue to offer periodic seminars to interested executives who would like to explore child care options.

Community Involvement

Our Centers have also proven valuable to the community by serving the needs of working parents in the area. Our staffs in both centers work hard to maintain strong ties with the surrounding communities. Because we have strong relationships with many public and private social service agencies, we are able to give referrals to families when medical or special services may be needed.

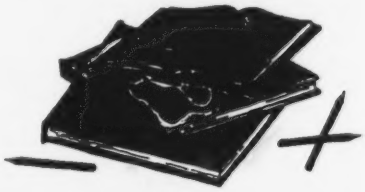
Our staff is kept informed of any community training opportunities and encouraged to take advantage of them whenever possible. We are also actively involved in child care advocacy groups that support the continued development of high-quality, affordable child care.

Physical Space

The Boston Children's Center occupies space on the first floor of Stride Rite's original headquarters location. Initially designed to serve 25 children, the Boston Center was allotted approximately 1,900 square feet. Now, with up to 50 children attending, the Center covers 3,400 square feet in one large, open learning environment. Designed with strong emphasis on the functional, it includes a kitchen, cubby room, bathroom, office, teacher's room, laundry, and gym, as well as classroom space. Soon after this Center opened, the staff, working jointly with parents, designed and built an outdoor playground on an adjacent lot. It measures 65 × 90 feet.

The Cambridge Children's Center is located on the second floor of an office building adjacent to Stride Rite's corporate offices. The Center occupies approximately 2,800 square feet and serves up to 38 children. This facility is divided into separate classrooms for each age group of children: three-, four-, and five-year-olds. In addition, the Center has a kitchen/eating area and a gym room.

While the Cambridge Center has its own playground one block away, the staff and children also take advantage of several community parks and playgrounds within walking distance of the Center.

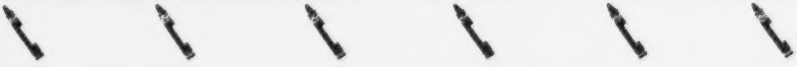


Finances

At the present time, the cost to provide child care at the two Centers is approximately $6,000 per child per year. This cost is shared by The Stride Rite Corporation, by the parents of children in the Centers, and by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. In addition, the food program is partially financed by the United States Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Nutrition.

Parent fees for Stride Rite employees are based on the individual's gross income and amount to approximately 14% of the gross pay. Children from the community who are members of low-income families receive subsidies from the Department of Social Services. The Stride Rite Corporation pays the balance of the costs, which amount to about one-half of the total budget.

If space is available, other children from the community are accepted, and these parents pay the full cost for child care.



The Stride Rite Corporation

Five Cambridge Center
Cambridge, MA 02142 617-491-8800

Nature of business: Manufacturer and marketer of children's and adults' shoes, sold under the brand names Stride Rite, Keds, and Sperry Topsider.
Number of employees: 3,600.
Female employees: 65 percent (35 percent of managers).
Child care: On-site centers in Cambridge and Roxbury, Massachusetts, for 110 children, aged fifteen months to six years (Cambridge center includes adult day-care wing and intergenerational activities); income-based subsidies; nationwide resource-and-referral service planned for 1991.
Elder care: On-site adult day-care center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with capacity for twenty-four elders (center includes child-care wing and intergenerational activities); income-based subsidies.
Family leave: Paid disability leave for childbirth, plus up to eighteen weeks unpaid family leave; paid time off may be used for short-term care of ill dependents.
Flexible work options: Flexible schedules arranged individually; some part-time work.
Other benefits: Lunchtime seminars on family issues; on-site fitness center at headquarters.

Meeting employees' and the community's needs; a tradition of innovation.

"We don't live in a vacuum. We live in a community. And that community has needs. It is people from the commu-

nity who buy our products and support our business. It doesn't seem so farfetched to have an interest in the well-being of that community. We're just broadening the definition of our self-interest."

ARNOLD HIATT
Chairman

On a Tuesday morning at the Stride Rite Corporation's headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts, an unusual scene is unfolding. Two elderly women, Eva DaRosa and Margaret Donovan, are ferrying preschoolers, two at a time, from their classroom on the fourth floor of the company's office tower to a common area where a group of elders and teachers helps the children make a hand-print mural. The children are enjoying the hand-print project, but the real fun of the day has turned out to be the ride in Donovan's wheelchair. Each pair of children takes turns riding in Donovan's lap and pushing the chair with the help of DaRosa. One child gets to ride on the way out, the other on the way back to their classroom. The women are enjoying the event almost as much, and after a dozen runs have dubbed themselves the pony express.

This is Stride Rite's intergenerational day-care center, the first such center in American business, one of the first centers in the country to pair the care of children and the elderly.

Stride Rite has a long history of leadership in family-care issues. The company started its first child-care center in 1971, in Roxbury, Massachusetts, at a time when such initiatives were few and far between. That facility is still going strong, one of a select handful of employer-supported child-care centers with such a long track record. The company added a second child-care center for its Cambridge employees in 1983, and expanded that into the current intergenerational center in 1990.

The idea for Stride Rite's first child-care effort belongs to the company's chairman, Arnold Hiatt. He joined the business in 1968, when Stride Rite bought the small children's shoe company he had started, and he became president of the larger business two years later. One of his first acts as president was to propose a dramatic change in the company's practice of charitable giving. "The company had had a charitable foundation for some time," Hiatt explains, "but it had limited itself to the traditional kinds of gifts—to hospitals, universities, and other very visible community organizations—and had played a relatively passive check-writing role. I felt it was time for us to do something in a more targeted way, time to play a more active role in our community. At the time our offices and our plant

were located in Roxbury, and I thought we ought to do something right there."

Since Stride Rite's primary business is children's shoes (though Keds and Sperry Topsider now contribute a substantial portion of the company's sales), the foundation has always concentrated its giving on initiatives that benefit children. As its first strong community initiative, Hiatt proposed that the foundation help to start a day-care center.

The board of directors took some convincing—they were uncomfortable at first about entangling the company in an endeavor so unrelated to its main business—but they eventually came around and allowed Hiatt to move ahead with his plan. As his primary model, Hiatt looked to the Head Start program, which by 1970 had proven its success as a means of giving underprivileged children a boost in their educations. Studies had shown that young Head Start graduates performed better in school, and most analysts foresaw long-term societal benefits as well: lower dropout rates for those who built on that early advantage, and lower unemployment and crime rates later on. As his first director, Hiatt hired Miriam Kurtzman, who had been running a Head Start program in East Boston.

The center was built in a space on the ground floor of the company's Roxbury factory, with a playground across the street in what had been a vacant lot, and it opened its doors in the spring of 1971. At some early stage, either during renovations or soon after it opened, the center's focus shifted slightly to include care for the children of employees.

"We're given credit for being a pioneer in employer-supported day care," says Hiatt, "but our aim was to provide child care for the community, for children of welfare families and single-parent households. Shortly after we started, however, one of our workers approached me and said, 'You're willing to do this for the children in the neighborhood. Why not do the same for our children?' And I said fine. And from that day forward we tried to maintain a balance at the center between children from the community and the children of our employees."

Stride Rite's Roxbury child-care center is still going strong, though changes at the company have led to changes in its population of children. The business moved its headquarters to Cambridge, and added a second child-care center there in 1983. The company has also changed the function of the Roxbury plant from a production facility to a warehouse and distribution center. The two moves have led to a drop in employment at the site, from about 1,500 when the child-care center opened in 1971 to approximately 150 today. The center still cares for the same

number of children, but a higher proportion of them are from the community.

> *Having this child-care center here makes all the difference in the world to us. My daughter had been in family day care prior to coming to the center, and her care giver was warm and loving and wonderful, but she was very unreliable. She took a lot of time off and caused me a lot of stress. I had to use up my vacation and sick time with no notice. Now I can plan vacations with my family. She was also an hour away from where I worked, so I felt bad that I couldn't see her during the day. I hated that. Now my daughter is in the same building, and it's stress-free for me. She's getting the best care. The teachers are dedicated and sensitive; they're right on target with the children's developmental needs. I feel total confidence in the center. I can just go downstairs and see her. I get reports during the day from people who have seen her. Just knowing that I could go down there at any time is very soothing. And she knows that I'm in the building. She understands. She knows that when we come in she goes to the fourth floor and I go to the seventh.*
>
> *My son is three and a half and just started at the day care in July. It has taken so much stress out of our lives, because I can just bring him in to work with me, and the hours match my schedule. Where he was before, we had to pick him up at four o'clock. My husband, who is a police officer, could usually get off work in time to pick him up, but sometimes he had to work later and we would have to find someone else to pick him up. It was too early for us. And the earliest we could drop him off in the morning was at eight o'clock. I was always coming in late to work, because it was up to me to bring him in in the morning. It was very hard. Now I can just bring him with me when I come in to work, and take him home when I leave. It's no problem. And my husband is very happy too.*

Karen Leibold joined the company in 1983 as director of Stride Rite's new Cambridge child-care center. She headed the program for five years until moving into the broader role of director of work/family programs, and in her tenure with the business has overseen the relocation and expansion of the center, and the creation of an accompanying elder day-care center.

With the child-care programs well established and in the competent hands of Kurtzman and Leibold, Arnold Hiatt began to turn his attention to other ways of effecting positive change in the community with Stride Rite's charitable money. He established a fund of $300,000 for students and graduates of the law schools at Harvard and Northeastern University who participate in public-service activities, as a way of encouraging new lawyers to consider public-service careers. In the early 1980s, he also began to think about what the company could do to help the elderly in the community. "I began thinking about the enormous waste of energy that was building among the retired community," Hiatt says, "people who didn't have anywhere to channel their energy. I was aware of the opportunities that children provide as a focus, and their needs, now that so many don't have extended families or grandparents nearby. It seemed to me that these two groups had something to give each other."

That thinking began to gel when he read a *Wall Street Journal* article in 1986 that described the stresses faced by families with both child-care and elder-care responsibilities. He clipped the story and sent it to Karen Leibold with a note attached asking if it didn't make sense to offer services for both generations in the same place. That might have been the end of it, but Leibold picked up on the idea and began to think seriously about what the company could do.

"An on-site elder day-care center just seemed like a logical next step," says Leibold. "We had been looking to relocate the child-care center in Cambridge, and we had the opportunity to add this into the plans." Elder care was just beginning to surface as an employment issue. The Travelers surveyed its employees in 1985 and found that one in five had some responsibility for the care of an elderly relative, and surveys at other companies began to confirm that elder care was a concern for huge numbers of workers. But Stride Rite could find no models for the sort of intergenerational approach it had in mind. Companies were beginning to think about the issue, but very few had acted.

"We did a lot of reading that first year," says Leibold. "We did a lot of traveling. We did a lot of research to find out what was out there, what other employers were doing. We found some companies that were thinking about elder care, but very few that had reached the point of actually offering their employees any direct services. The field had just not yet been defined or even explored to any great extent. We found some intergenerational centers at nursing homes, where the businesses had started child-care centers as an employee benefit. But in those, the two services were kept separate, so the children and the elders had virtually no contact with each other. We found community ser-

vice centers that provided child care or ran a Head Start program in one section, and a senior center down the hall, and the two groups would occasionally get together to celebrate holidays. There were beginnings all over, but at the end of that first year we realized that if we were going to do this, we would have to create the model ourselves, both in the intergenerational aspect and in the employer response to the whole elder-care issue."

The company made two connections early on that would guide its actions and help determine the form of the eventual program. Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, a community agency, approached Stride Rite about providing care for the children of the agency's employees, and in the course of the discussions agreed to join forces with the company in an advising role as it created the elder-care program. The company made an academic link as well, bringing in Wheelock College as an additional partner in the venture to help shape the program and then to study its effects on the elders, the children, the workers, and the company. All along, the Stride Rite Charitable Foundation provided the basic funding for the project. The elder services agency and the college provided staff time and expertise.

> *My son, who is five, calls the elders in the center "the olderlies," which is something he made up. I've never heard anyone else call them that. He enjoys projects with "the olderlies." I know he feels very special about them. He's very quiet, and they may not know who he is, but he knows all of them. He knows their last names. They read stories together. They cook together. They made pizzelles one time. They make crafts together. Last Friday we had a magician in the center, and the children and the elders were dancing around together and singing and clapping hands. It was really very touching to see.*
>
> *The only other older people he has much contact with are his grandparents, whom we see every other week. And I see him interacting with them much more easily now. I don't know if he was frightened of older people before or not. But it seems as though this has made his relationship with older people a lot more open.*

As a first step, Stride Rite and its collaborators surveyed employees to determine the level of elder-care need, and the community to find out about the level of elder day-care supply. They found that 25 percent of Stride Rite's employees had some sort of elder-care responsibilities, and that another 13 percent expected to take on care-giving responsibilities within the next five years, figures in line with what other companies were dis-

covering. And they found two elder day-care centers in the community, both of which were operating near capacity.

"We felt the need was there," says Leibold, "and growing. We decided that even if the center didn't fill immediately, we will eventually have enough of a population who will need it that it will offer an important benefit."

As the company moved forward with its plans for a new child-care center, it set aside space for an adjacent elder-care wing, and common areas for intergenerational activities. The staff at the center worked with experts at Wheelock and Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services to design the space to meet the needs of both elders and children, and to create an intergenerational curriculum.

The Stride Rite Intergenerational Day Care Center opened in February 1990, with space for fifty-five children and twenty-four elders. Both are housed on the fourth floor of the company's office tower, in a facility with three distinct areas. In each, efforts have been made to soften the effect of the office environment. From the elevator bank, the entrance to the center opens into the common area, with tables and chairs of all heights, a kitchen, and a low cooking counter with adjustable-height chairs. The hallway to the child-care center leads off to the left, broken up with zigs and zags to make rooms with corners and nooks, and to make the approach into the space less sterile. Brightly colored sections of wall, indoor climbing structures, pets on tables, and shelves filled with toys all tend to disguise the fact that the center is housed in a glass-and-steel tower. Only the huge windows, looking down four stories to the street below, offer a reminder of the corporate location. To the other side of the common space is the elders' area, with dark wooden furniture, wicker chairs, magazine racks, and plants. Double-hung windows here give a homelike environment to the inside space.

The center opened with just two elders, but through the spring and summer enrollment gradually swelled, until, by the fall of 1990, it took in eleven elders each week. Since the center is open only to elders with a narrow range of needs—they must be too healthy to need nursing-home care, yet frail enough to need some sort of help—the center is not a universal benefit. Not every elderly relative is a suitable candidate. As we went to press, the elder wing of the center remained largely a community rather than a company benefit; just one attendee, the grandmother of an employee, had any connection to Stride Rite.

After just a few months of operation, the intergenerational aspects were already proving to be a great success for those on both sides of the center. "The relationship between the children and the elders has really exceeded our expectations," says Lei-

bold. "We thought we'd need to bring them together very slowly, with a lot of staff direction and with specific projects to do. What we've found is that they're like magnets with each other. They just come together. They enjoy each other's company. Sometimes it can be for five minutes at the beginning or the end of the day, when they meet in the entryway. Sometimes it's waving across the lunchroom at each other. Sometimes it can be an extended period of time, reading books together, or cooking, or making things with blocks or Play-Doh."

The elders sometimes wander down to play with the children in their rooms. The children don't have the same freedom, but they can ask permission to go visit the elder wing, and, if the timing is right, a teacher will take one or two children over, just to sit on the elders' laps, to talk, or to read a book. The elders can invite the children over for cooking projects, or to share something they have cooked, and both groups participate in regular combined activities.

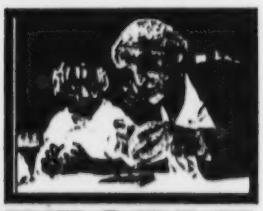
> *My grandmother is in the center, my father's mother. She's seventy-three years old, widowed for thirteen years, and living alone for the last three years. She's too healthy and active to be in a nursing home, yet too proud to move in with another family member. She's very independent. So we found a retirement home for her, with a variety of levels of care, but over the past year, she was becoming depressed as some of her friends' health deteriorated. I didn't like going over to visit her after a while, because the conversation just focused on health.*
>
> *Since she's started coming in with me she's had much more exciting things to talk about, and she looks forward to it. This is a healthier group of people. They talk about current events. They go for walks in Boston, daily walking trips, to museums or plays. This provides her with stimulation for a good chunk of her day. And the children do wonderful things for the elders.*
>
> *Since she moved into the retirement home she hadn't done any cooking. They didn't have the facilities, and the residents weren't allowed to cook. Well, that was her passion before. And here she can cook, and she has an appreciative audience. I brought in her pizzelle iron—like a waffle iron—one day, for making the old Italian cookies that she used to make all the time. And she and the other elders rehashed the old recipe and got the children involved sprinkling powdered sugar on the cookies when they were finished. It was just a wonderful feeling for me to see her doing what she used to love to do.*

> *I think this has revived her. The center has given life back to her. She feels like she is coming here and giving while she is here. She's helping the children tie shoelaces. She's working with the children when they have art projects. My grandmother isn't able to read a book to them, but the other elders do that. She just enjoys what goes on there.*

Though the elder day care did not turn out to be a widely used employee benefit in its first year, employees with children in the center seem pleased with the center's broadened scope, with the chance their children now have to make contact with older people. For Arnold Hiatt, the fact that few employees have taken advantage of the elder day-care option is almost incidental. The important thing seems to be to try it out, to provide a service that benefits the community. If it can be a help to the company's employees eventually, so much the better. While many managers look at family programs in terms of their direct bottom-line effects—in reduced turnover, lower recruitment costs, and higher productivity—Hiatt seems to look at his company's interests from a different vantage point. "We don't live in a vacuum," he observes. "We live in a community. And that community has needs. It is people from the community who buy our products and support our business. It doesn't seem so farfetched to have an interest in the well-being of that community. We're just broadening the definition of our self-interest."

Leibold and Hiatt are proud to have created a model for other companies to study. Theirs may not be the one ultimately adopted by many businesses, but they have created an option. As they sort through the program and find out what works and what doesn't, they will undoubtedly provide a long-term service that goes far beyond the small number of people they directly serve.

> *At the end of the day, either I will take my grandmother home and spend an hour with her in the evening, or my father will come in and spend the last hour with her here. When I take her home, we'll often have dinner on the way home or go to a movie. It's a big change for me to visit her or take her out to dinner. She used to be depressing. Now she just bubbles over with stories of what's gone on that day. I feel like I'm the lucky one of all her nine grandchildren, because I get to see her every day. We all benefit from her stories and her new enthusiasm, but I get the benefit every day.*



PEOPLE

PHOTOS BY R. NORMAN MATHENY STAFF

SHARED DAYS: *At right, Marguerite Madden reads to Christine Lee, while Eva DaRosa (above, left), a widow who has two grown children, colors Easter eggs with Shanece Hicks.*

A year after opening, Stride Rite Intergenerational Day Care Center has learned not-so-easy lessons about natural, not forced, interaction among children and elders

Day Care Program Bridges Generations

By Laura Van Tuyl
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

FIVE elderly women and three preschool children sit around a rectangular art table, supplied with a carton of hard-boiled eggs and bowls of red, blue, and yellow vinegar-scented dye.

An onlooker might think the activity is egg coloring, but here at the Stride Rite Intergenerational Day Care Center, the project is "togetherness."

"That will be a nice egg that you can take home to Mummy," says one 80-year-old woman to a three-year-old boy sitting next to her. "You're such a good painter."

Getting children and older people to interact and form friendships is a goal of this unusual day-care center, owned and operated by the Stride Rite Corporation, retailer of children's and adult footwear.

Here the two age groups come and go every day, eat meals together, take walks, share in craft activities, and, staff members hope, feel enriched by one another's presence.

The center, which serves the local community as well as company employees, opened more than a year ago amid a deluge of media attention.

Since then, staff members have learned not-so-easy lessons about how to encourage natural, not forced, interaction among the children and elders. In addition, a cross-generational curriculum is slowly emerging, they say, that breaks new ground in teaching techniques.

At the outset, "We didn't really know what would happen," says teacher Barbara Courtney.

Company officials say they hope the center will become a model for other corporations seeking to address employees' growing need for both child care and elder care.

"The need for elder care is really going to reach crisis proportions in the next few years," says Karen Leibold, director of work and family programs for Stride Rite. According to the National Council on Aging Inc., the number of older Americans has increased by 18 percent, to 4.7 million, since 1980, compared with an increase of 7 percent for the under-65 population.

Workers with both aging, disabled parents, and small children – labeled "the sandwich generation" – will be looking to employers for care assistance in both areas, says Ms. Leibold.

Though Stride Rite is considered a pioneer in corporate day-care – their first on-site center opened 20 years ago – staff members say they had to start "cold" in the area of intergenerational care – a subject just being broached in early-childhood education and health-care circles.

The elders, mostly aged 70 to 90, are carefully screened before being enrolled. No personal care is given, so all of them are ambulatory and considered "highly functional," says Leibold.

"Many of them live alone but have children nearby, and they need a little extra support," comments Pamela Schmidt, intergenerational coordinator at the center. For $28 a day, elders can come once a week or every day, if they wish. Some are dropped off in the morning by their grown children who are on their way to work. The center has 16 elders so far, with slots for 24. Only one of them has a relative who works for Stride Rite.

"When I came here I just loved it and the people were wonderful," says Eva DaRosa, a widow who has two grown children and several grandchildren. "I think it's better than being by yourself at home."

An ongoing challenge for the preschool teachers and the elder-care staff is developing a curriculum enjoyable to the children and yet dignified and enriching for the adults. (Seniors can retreat anytime to "the porch," a quiet, window-filled living room with handsome furnishings, books, and newspapers.)

The elders "don't want to fingerpaint," says Mrs. Schmidt. Successful projects, she says, have been learning Japanese brush painting, growing paper-white narcissuses in pots, and building terrariums out of plastic soda bottles. In addition to non-ageist, the curriculum attempts to be non-sexist and multicultural.

At first, the staff noticed a sense of competition developing between the adults and the kids as to who could make "the best" drawing or object. "There wasn't enough meaningful contact because everyone was so concerned with finishing their product," says Schmidt. The staff now works to emphasize the process, being together, and having fun, rather than what the finished products look like, she says.

While all of the elders appear to enjoy being around the children, the center is not for everyone. One elderly gentleman several months ago tended to lose his temper around the kids and yell at them for being noisy, says Schmidt. He did not return.

Once the elders and children took a field trip to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts – an excursion that turned out to be "a disaster," confesses Schmidt. The kids walked faster than the elders, and the two groups didn't mingle.

"We learned that large groups don't create intimacy," says Schmidt. "If we have three kids and four elders, a smaller ratio, it gives the kids a lot more attention, which they bask in."

The teachers have found that physical contact is a good way to create a relaxed atmosphere conducive to communication. The children often sit on elders' laps to read books, or hold their hands while going for walks. One woman gives rides to some of the kids as she sits in her wheelchair.

"By bringing them together, we're creating relationships that can transcend stereotypes" about aging, says Leibold. The children and elders "can become advocates for each other."

More Businesses Now Help With Child Care

BOSTON

CHILD-CARE advocates and researchers say that over the past decade there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of American businesses providing child-care assistance.

The growth has been "astronomic," says Daniel Dreyer, research assistant in the Work and Family Center of the Conference Board, a nonprofit research firm that tracks business trends. The number of employers in the United States offering child-care assistance rose from 110 in 1978 to 5,400 in 1990, Mr. Dreyer says.

Benefits range from on-site day-care centers to day-care tuition subsidies to employer contracts with referral services. But the percentage of participating companies is still small, given that there are about 6 million businesses in the US.

In 1989, John Hancock Financial Services in Boston surveyed its employees and found that 75 percent of those with children aged 3 to 12 had problems finding and affording high-quality child care.

In response, the company last fall opened its own 41,000 square-foot child-care center (including two outdoor playgrounds) at a cost of $3 million. The center has room for 200 children and boasts state-of-the art equipment.

"If you can't address this kind of need ... it causes people to make decisions they don't want to make – like not working, accepting a job closer to home, or working part-time," says David D'Alessandro, senior executive vice president of the retail sector. Hancock also pays more than $1 million a year in subsidies for enrollment. "It's an incredible recruitment tool," he adds.

A stumbling block to companies that want to provide child-care help is "ignorance of their options," says Stuart Cleinman of the Massachusetts Child Care Resource Center. Some officials say that because they can't afford a day-care center, "there's nothing they can do," he says.

But Mr. Cleinman says helping employees with child care has many facets, ranging from flexible work schedules to school-vacation recreation programs to day-care tuition assistance. Massachusetts's Executive Office of Economic Affairs recently published a booklet, "The Family Care Guide," that explains employers' options.

– L. V. T.

ance if not total refusal to cooperate."

Reversing roles is one of the hardest aspects of caring for an aged parent. Kristeen Davis says her mother was "a really sharp lady—and one of my best friends" before Alzheimer's set in. Now, Davis says, "sometimes she just sits there like a little lump that used to be a person." Elderly people find it even harder to relinquish their old parental roles. Many are desperately afraid of burdening their busy children, yet desperately afraid of being alone.

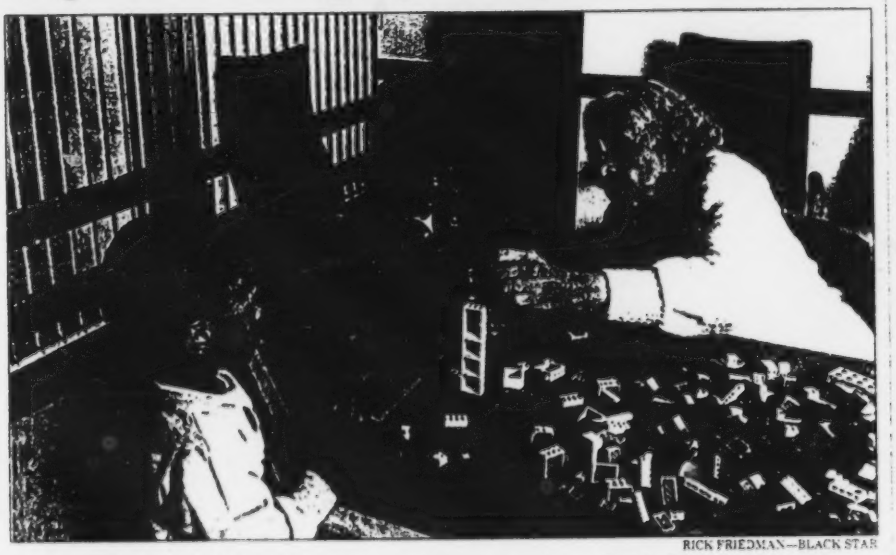
Dot von Gerbig's mother and father moved in to help her in 1969, when she was a widow raising small children. Today, they still share her Honey Brook, Pa., home, along with her second husband and their 15-year old son. Von Gerbig's father, 92, is confined to a wheelchair; her mother, 84, is mentally confused, and both are legally blind. Before leaving for work at 7 a.m., von Gerbig arranges every aspect of their lives, laying out clothes and organizing food in the refrigerator, so they can manage by themselves until she returns. "So far, we're making it," says von Gerbig, 52. But she lives in fear that something will go wrong and make her break her vow to keep them out of a nursing home. What troubles her even more, she says, is how terribly cruel the aging process is. "It makes me angry and it makes me fearful," she says. "It's an awful thing that a person does a good job all his life and this is his reward."

Most caregivers lament that they can't do more for their parents. Some of the toughest constraints are financial. Medicare does not cover the costs of long-term care, anywhere. Medicaid will pay for nursing homes, and home care in some states, but only after a patient has depleted his assets nearly to the poverty level. Thus, many elderly people exhaust their life savings paying for care, and families dig deep into their own pockets to help them.

Many married women, particularly those in low-paying jobs, find it cheaper to quit work and care for aging relatives themselves than to hire home health care. Professional women are less inclined to quit and more apt to hire help. Many are torn between the parents they cherish and the work they love. Just when many have gotten a long-awaited promotion, they find their parents in need of care.

Charlotte Darrow decided she had to abandon her career as a social psychologist

Day Care: Bridging the Generation Gap



RICK FRIEDMAN—BLACK STAR

A pioneer in family-oriented benefits: *Young and old get together at Stride Rite's new center*

The Stride Rite Corp. has long been a pioneer in family-oriented employee benefits. In 1971 the Cambridge, Mass., shoe manufacturer opened one of the nation's first corporate day-care centers. The facility now has a capacity enrollment of 55 kids, 15 months to 6 years, and this year welcomed some new participants: seven elderly people. Stride Rite's Intergenerational Day Care Center is believed to be the first mixed-age on-site center in the country.

The project is the brainchild of Stride Rite chief executive officer Arnold Hiatt, 63. "To me, it's an investment, an economic investment," he says. "To the extent that you can help your colleagues with their problems, you integrate them onto the team and you have an advantage over your competition." A few years ago, Hiatt ordered up a study to see if mixing the generations would work at Stride Rite. The 1988 survey indicated that about 25 percent of the workers had some responsibility for an aging parent and another 13 percent expected to face the issue in the next five years. Hiatt forged ahead with a $700,000 facility with wings for each group, joined by a common area.

The first elderly participants arrived in February. Although there are only seven now, the center can care for 24 old people, community residents as well as relatives of employees. Karen Leibold, Stride Rite director of work and family programs, attributes the vacancies to the newness of the program. "It takes time to develop your enrollment," she says. One of the women is 73-year-old Josephine Campanelli, grandmother of Rona Campanelli, 25, a Stride Rite real-estate analyst. "I feel tons and tons of gratitude toward Stride Rite for providing such a service," says Rona.

State subsidies: Stride Rite says it costs about $150 to $170 a week to care for a child, and $140 for an older person. Employees pay according to income (the company's charitable foundation makes up the difference). Other participants pay the full rate, although state subsidies are available to those who need them.

The elderly people and the children spend some time together but they also have separate activities. One day recently, children in the four classrooms climbed on gym equipment while the elderly women discussed current events in the library. The women also read to the children. After Eva DaRosa, 79, finished the story "Caps for Sale," Vanessa Doleyres, 5, pranced happily about singing "Caps for sale; caps for sale." Her verdict on Stride Rite's social experiment: "I like doing things with the ladies." Adds Doris White, 71: "The children give us life."

BARBARA KANTROWITZ *with* LAUREN PICKER *in Cambridge*

Day care center bridges gap between generations

By KATHLEEN TELTSCH
The New York Times

While corporate day care centers for children are springing up across the country, a center in Cambridge run by Stride Rite Corp. is the first to bridge the generations in its workplace.

The center brings together children ages 18 months to 6 years and adults over 60, those whose biggest problem is not personal health but filling lonely days with a sense of purpose.

It is easy to forget that there are bigger social policy questions afoot here while watching Eva DaRosa, 79, sharing peanut butter crackers with preschoolers or hearing Geraldine Keane, 85, spinning a story about dinosaurs that rivets the attention of 4-year-olds.

But, in fact, the center is dealing with broader questions of how businesses can attract and keep a qualified work force, and how the nation should care for its oldest and youngest citizens.

"By the year 2000, almost half the employees in the work force will be providing child care, elder care or both," said Dr. Michael Creedon, a former professor of gerontology at the University of Bridgeport who is now director of corporate programs at the National Council on the Aging in Washington.

"We can expect more companies already providing child care to convert to intergenerational day care in order to help their employees."

The companies also gain -- in increased productivity and decreased turnover in workers. Creedon said a number of studies show that employees tend to lose five days a year on average because of problems in providing care for a member of the family.

Such problems are also likely to cause workers to quit their jobs, come late for work or use the telephone excessively for personal reasons.

The recently opened Intergenerational Day Care Center here in Stride Rite's headquarters fulfills a vision of Arnold Hiatt, the company's 62-year-old board chairman, who had read about working parents spending frantic hours each day, coordinating care for family members both old and young.

"I'm in business trying to orchestrate workers, materials, consumers and markets and to bring it all together," Hiatt said. "Why not a similar business approach to a societal problem? There are risks involved in engaging two vulnerable populations and no certtor. In 1971 it became the first corporation to open an on-site child care center.

It still operates the center, at its plant in nearby Roxbury, and 65 percent of the youngsters it serves come from the economically depressed neighborhood.

To develop the new center, Hiatt enlisted the help of Wheelock College, a Boston-based school specializing in child care and family studies, and Somerville/Cambridge Elder Services, a local nonprofit agency providing help to the elderly.

The partners were determined that the center not have the look and especially not the antiseptic smell of an institution. It does not. The aroma of chicken soup wafts from the kitchen at noon.

And sometimes at snacktime, there is the tempting smell of pretzels baked by Mrs. DaRosa and Mrs. Keane — the children prefer sticks they can wave to the twisted variety.

When the center becomes fully operational, it will accommodate 55 children, who can range in age from 18 months old to 6 years, and 24 adults over 60. It will be open not only to relatives of employees, but also to people in the community.

New York Times photo

Geraldine Keane reads to Sizwe Langa at the Intergenerational Day Care Center in Cambridge.

"It is more than likely that one of Stride Rite's 500 employees one day will enroll both a child and a parent at the center," said Karen Leibold, director of work and family programs for Stride Rite.

"If we look ahead, we see a chance for the two generations to get to know each other," said Ms. Leibold. "The elders will find and experience again what it is like to be a contributing member to the community."

The children have been coming since February to the center, which has a gym and rooms filled with a dream world of stuffed animals and toys.

The children, known as peanuts, muppets, rainbows and eagles, depending on their age, already have made an impact on the neighborhood.

On a typical afternoon walk, they make their daily call on the Hotel Marriott next door where they induce the bell captain to let them try on his plumed hat. They then visit the florist shop and Legal's Seafoods to see the lobster tank, returning home with day-old flowers and bags of oysterettes.

The elders' section opened two weeks ago with no formal ceremony except for the display of a finger-painted banner saying, "Welcome Eva and Gerry."

Mrs. DaRosa is dropped off at the center by her 48-year-old daughter, Maria, who works across the street at the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority.

The center, open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., now fills her mother's idle hours, Maria said, and she rides home animatedly talking about the day's events.

* * *

The elders have their own retreat at the center, a cozy area of couches, chairs and piles of flowered chintz pillows that Mrs DaRosa calls "the porch." Last Monday, the elders' program was built around the history of Cape Verde, the former Portuguese colony off the West African coast from which the DaRosa family came generations ago. Happily, Mrs. DaRosa danced a Mazuaka she learned in her younger years.

Mrs. Keane learned about the care center from her daughter, Nancy Kruger, vice president of training and development at the Greater Boston YMCA. Ms. Kruger, in turn, heard about it at a conference on child care.

Mrs. Keane, a former teacher, usually arrives with a book in hand — she gets herself to the center and home by taxi. She has volunteered to use the word-processor that will be installed in the elders' area so they can help prepare a newsletter about the center.

Next week, the two widows expect to be joined by Josephine Campanelli, 74, whose granddaughter, Ronna, is a real estate leasing assistant at Stride Rite.

Ms. Leibold said the company expected enrollment of elders to start slowly. "No one wanted to be the first through the door and many wanted to see how the center looked and what food was served," she said.

For the moment, the elder's and the children's groups meet only at meals and occasionally take outdoor walks together, but a few of the youngsters now come looking for Mrs. Keane to read.

"We realize you cannot push children and elders together," said Ms. Leibold. "You have to provide the opportunity for the relationships to develop. It cannot be forced."

An early childhood teacher, Ms Leibold came to Stride Rite seven years ago to direct its children's center. Her staff of 25 full- and part-time members includes teachers with advanced degrees and also a professional dancer, a musician, social workers and recreational therapists.

Ultimately there will also be a nurse, but the center is not designed to care for older adults with debilitating illness.

While Stride Rite hopes other companies will emulate the care center, Creedon makes the point that such programs would not meet the needs of all of America's elderly.

"My only reservation is we not forget that an integenerational center only meets the needs of some elders -- it does not serve those now in nursing homes, confined to bed at home or severely incapacitated," he said.

"For them, we still need a broad array of other responses such as flexible work schedules and more generous leave of absence policies for employees who are care givers."

Stride Rite spent $700,000 to convert 8,500 square feet of its fourth-floor headquarters for the center.

The company will subsidize the center's operating expenses, estimated to be $600,000 a year. The center estimates that it costs $150 a week to take care of a preschooler, $170 for a toddler and $140 for an elder.

Stride Rite employees pay fees from $20 to $130 a week for the children, depending on the family's income, and $85 a week for the older adults. The balance comes from a foundation set up by the company.

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Photo by Rick Friedman/Black Star

A Legos construction project is only part of what Eva DaRosa and her young friends are building – this intergenerational day care center also builds bonds between young and old. **See story on page 10.**

Caring for elders and kids in the workplace

by Hedy Weinberg
Senior Edition USA contributing editor

"Crunchies, the kids call 'em," says 76-year-old Harriet Strandberg, dipping into a bowl of cornflakes.

Silver-haired Eva DaRosa, 79, nods and sips her coffee.

As sunlight streams into the day care center, both women steal glances at a table of youngsters eating breakfast on the far side of the dining room.

A boy in a miniature tuxedo and red bow tie swaggers over to a trash can to clear his plate. "That's Richard," said DaRosa with a sudden smile. "Today's his birthday. He's five."

Old and young are involved in each others' lives at The Stride Rite Corporation's Intergenerational Day Care Center in Cambridge, Mass., the first of its kind in a corporate setting. In a society that too often segregates seniors, the shoe company has taken on a pioneering role in caring for both children and elders.

Karen Liebold, the center's director of program development, credits Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer Arnold Hiatt, "a man of vision, of real commitment." Under his leadership, Stride Rite was the nation's first company to found on-site child care for its employees in 1971. Then, three and a half years ago, Hiatt sent Liebold an article about a New York City couple with dual careers who spent hours commuting between adult and child day care centers to meet the needs of an elderly parent and a pre-school youngster.

"Doesn't it make more sense to do this all in one place?" Hiatt asked.

A Stride Rite internal survey showed that 25 percent of the shoe company's employees were providing some sort of elder care and 13 percent more expected to be providing it in the next five years. The statistics mirrored a national trend.

According to Dr. Michael Creedon, director of corporate programs for the National Council on the Aging (NCOA), studies of employees who report they're affected by caring for elders range from a low of eight percent at U S West to 30 percent at IBM to a high of 50 percent at some smaller Buffalo, N.Y., companies.

The NCOA reports that 40 percent of the American work force is involved in providing care for both children and elders – a figure expected to jump dramatically as the number of individuals over 65 years of age doubles in the next decade.

"Evidence is strong," said Creedon, "that eldercare obligations tend to increase time out of the office, excessive phone use, tardiness, worry, loss of sleep. There's an impact on productivity, and the bottom line for companies is productivity."

For DaRosa and Strandberg, however, the bottom line is emotional survival. The center fills empty hours. "There's a lot of laughter here," says Strandberg as they watch the kids hold hands and disappear down the hall.

Four women currently are in the facility, which has room for 24 elders and 55 children age 15 months to six years. Today only DaRosa and Strandberg are present to chat with Activity Coordinator Karen Bozzone. Topics range from purchasing a goldfish to DaRosa's efforts to recruit more elders from her neighborhood. "I've been advertising," she says in a deep voice, as she brushes crumbs from her purple pantsuit.

"Advertising" is acceptable because the corporation reserves approximately half of all openings for low-income elders and children in the Somerville-Cambridge area.

DaRosa, a widow, is dropped off every morning by her daughter Maria, who works at the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, while Strandberg is escorted by her husband Woody, a retired Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor.

Suddenly, Strandberg clutches the kerchief on her head and whispers, "I get all bungled up. I forget things." But talk turns, as it always does, to the children, and Strandberg's face clears. Tomorrow elders and children will bake oatmeal cookies. Yesterday the seniors made pizza "without the kids," Strandberg adds, "because there's lots of cutting."

When the center opened in February, Liebold thought it would take time to form relationships, but she soon discovered that the two groups have "a natural affinity ... We put some Legos on the table and they played, talked, had a wonderful time and kept themselves busy for 45 minutes!"

"The two groups have a terrific interest in each other, agreed Liz Stahl, assistant professor at Wheelock College. The Boston-based school, specializing in child care and family studies, donates time for curriculum development and research. They're so curious about each other, they'd spend hours just watching what the other group is doing ... so when you have that kind of magnetism going on, you've already got the basis for developing a life together."

That life is housed in an environment especially created for intergenerational programing by Katherine McGuinness and Associates Inc. of Waltham, Mass., an architecture firm known for its expertise in accessibility and aging in place design. Stride Rite spent $700,000 to convert 8,500 square feet of its headquarters into a home-like, non-institutional setting.

David Kessler, a principal of the firm who holds a degree in social gerontology, calls the results "an environmental laboratory. Many elders and many children share common problems in their interactions with the physical environment," he said, "but you can't necessarily solve the problems the same way."

Solutions meant brainstorming by all project leaders: the staff, Wheelock faculty and representatives from Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, a non-profit social service agency. The process, said Liebold, "forced us to take six or seven steps back and think about program goals." The group began to realize that they wanted intergenerational interactions to occur throughout the space, so "all the children's rooms have adult-sized furniture in them, and the adults' rooms have adjustable chairs for children and elders," said Liebold, pointing to a bookcase in the elders' wing. "That bottom shelf is reserved for kids' books."

Tables have adjustable heights for wheelchair accessibility. Specially raised floors on one side of normal-height tables allow young and old, big and small to share the same space. To insure privacy for adults, however, elders' and children's rooms are in separate wings.

The entry carries out the garden theme with wicker furniture covered with flowered chintz in tones of terra cotta, teal, green and peach. "Front porch" areas with trellises and double-hung windows provide vistas and allow elders, children and visitors "to observe first, then decide whether to commit (to an activity)," explained Kessler. Teal squares in the carpeting mark a visual pathway to aid a tired or forgetful person back to the elders' wing.

The central dining room, however, is the space Kessler terms "the premier intergenerational meeting area." A special cooking center encourages chefs of all ages and continues the home-garden theme. "We wanted the center to smell good—not just look good," said the architect.

It works. The spicy smell of lasagna drifts through the elders' activity area and into the library, a cozy corner room filled with plants and wingback chairs. Here, Bozzone, DaRosa and Strandberg relax and read a newsletter with messages from all four children's groups—labled "peanuts," "muppets," "rainbows," and "eagles," according to age.

"The eagles," says DaRosa, "are the ones we hang around with the most ... I just say get a book and come on in."

Sunlight floods the room, and the women enjoy a companionable silence until three eagles—Candace, Trevor and Vanessa—arrive to make stuffed paper bears. Bozzone directs the project. "Who knows what a half-circle is? Tell them, Hatty," she says to Strandberg.

"I beat you!" shrieks Vanessa, wielding an orange crayon. Two pink bows in her hair quiver as she squirms with delight. While DaRosa helps Candace cut out her bear and fill it with cotton balls, Vanessa moves closer and shyly says, "I'm going to be Eva's buddy!"

"Of course you're my buddy," says DaRosa, putting her hand on Vanessa's shoulder. "I'm glad you're my buddy."

Meanwhile, Ronna Campanelli, who analyzes retail locations for Stride Rite, drops in from her upstairs office "to relieve the stress in my day." So far, Campanelli is the only employee who has enrolled a relative—her 73-year-old grandmother Josephine. The center provides her widowed grandmother with "fun," says Campanelli, "Here, I can pop in during the day. It gives me an excuse to see her more."

The price tag for that contact is affordable. Although the center's cost of caring for a dependent runs about $150 per week, the corporation's charitable foundation subsidizes Stride Rite employees on a sliding fee basis.

With financial support assured, the center continues to upgrade its program. An intergenerational coordinator has been hired and, said Stahl, "We would hope at some point to hire more elders as staff at the center so that you get the range of role models—not just the people in care but (those) providing care." Also in the works, via Wheelock College, are curriculum planning plus research evaluating the program and its effect on workers and families. One study will measure children's attitudes toward aging. Meanwhile, the eagles' attitudes are quite clear. At lunchtime, as DaRosa and Strandberg finish their last bites of salad and steaming lasagna, the children stop by their table.

"I just got over chicken pox," says one little girl. "I had it in my ears."

"Oh, I remember when that happened to me," Strandberg commiserates. She puts an arm around the youngster.

"I forget what we had ..." says a boy who grimaces with the effort of recalling the name of the pasta dish.

"I know," answers DaRosa. "I forget too. You and I are in the same boat."

"See you tomorrow!" the kids yell, as a teacher leads them down the hall.

"I wish..." says DaRosa, "I wish they could stay here a while longer." ♦

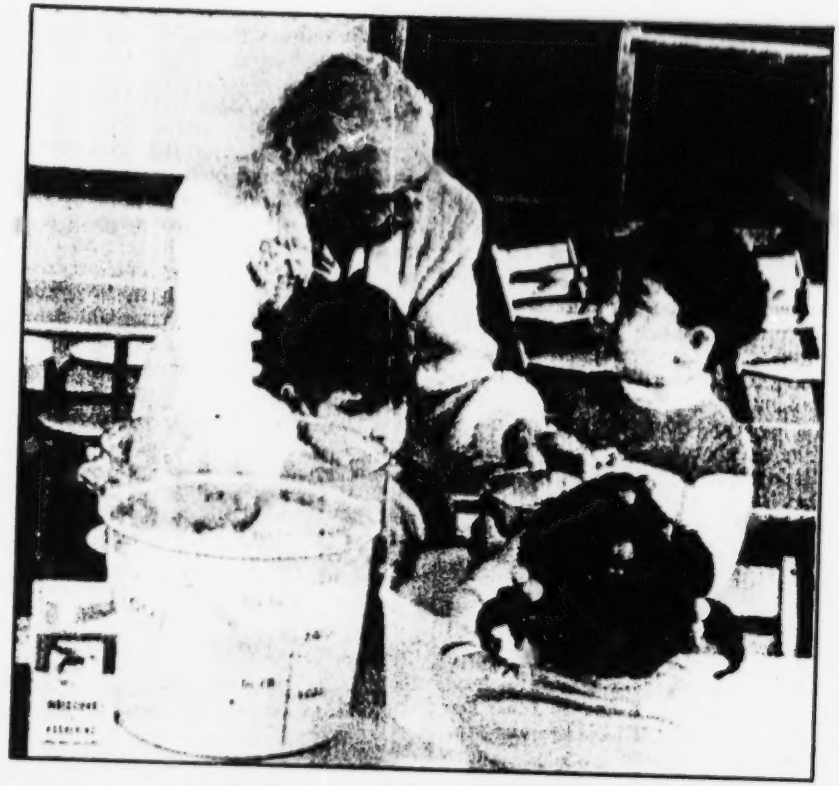


Photo by Rick Friedman/Black Star

At The Stride Rite Corporation's Intergenerational Day Care Center, a cooking center encourages chefs of all ages. Eva DaRosa, 79, shares her culinary expertise with eager students.

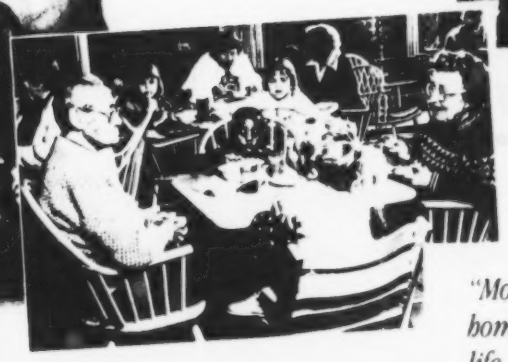
"An idea so simple and so wonderful it is surprising that it has not taken hold sooner."

-THE BOSTON GLOBE

If you are involved in caring for an elderly member of your family who needs a safe, pleasant place to be while you work, who could benefit from social interaction and stimulation, or who needs some assistance and supervision during the day, you should know about The Stride Rite Intergenerational Day Care Center.

Elders who come to the Center spend days filled with activity — socializing with each other, taking accompanied strolls in the neighborhood, spending time with children.

Participants receive professional support and care, yet retain as much independence as possible.



"There's a lot of laughter here."

-HARRIET, 76

Daily Schedule and Activities

Elders are free to join a variety of daily planned activities, regular exercise, outings and leisurely pursuits at the Center.

An intergenerational project generally takes place each morning. Children and elders come together for activities including reading, baking and painting.

Regular outings have taken elders to places such as the Wheelock Family Theatre, The Museum of Fine Arts, and The New England Aquarium.

Active participation in Center activities is always encouraged; never required.

Participants

The Intergenerational Center is the day-time home for elders over the age of 60 and children age 15 months to 6 years. It is open to the public. Elderly men and women who seek companionship or need some assistance and supervision during the day can participate in the program.

Elders who are unsafe or withdrawn when home alone all day can benefit significantly from the socialization and care offered at the Center.

Seniors should be able to take care of their personal needs with a minimal amount of assistance.

"Mother was unhappy staying at home; she used to live a very active life. My father is the primary caregiver and he needed time for himself. The Intergenerational Center has been tremendous. Mother is very happy with the activities and her walks. Dad and I are comfortable knowing she's getting the professional attention and stimulation she needs."

-DAUGHTER OF A PARTICIPANT

Professional Care and Support

The Intergenerational Center is staffed by professionals from both the elder and child care fields.

Coordinators for the elder program have training in areas such as gerontology, rehabilitation, social service, and recreational therapy. They are skilled in working with elders who may experience confusion, anxiety, depression, and other difficulties.

Participants are served breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack, providing for more than two-thirds their daily nutrition requirements. Meals can be tailored to fit specific dietary needs, such as a diabetic or low-salt diet.

Home-Like Setting

Spacious, colorful, and comfortable, the physical design of the Center encourages interaction between children and elders, yet provides distinctly separate areas for the privacy of each group.

The elders' wing consists of a large activity area, an arts and crafts room, a sun-filled library furnished with sofa and armchairs, two private bathrooms and a laundry.

Hours

Operating hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, to accommodate the needs of working caregivers. A minimum of two days per week, six hours per day is required.

Cost

The cost to attend the elder program is competitive with similar elder care programs. Tuition can be paid by a participant and/or family members.

STRIDE RITE INTERGENERATIONAL
DAY CARE CENTER ELDER PROGRAM

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Stride Rite

Intergenerational Day Care Center

Elder Program